

Their rigorous environment and lack of a close social structure that would automatically provide the aging hunter with helpers or the widow who has children with a husband make the problem of food supply terribly pressing for these people. It was for this reason that Ketédn made my next-door neighbor, Kuthúgn, a member of his household when the latter was still a boy. "When I am dead," said Ketédn, "you will take care of my wife and children." Events showed that Ketédn had acted with foresight—perhaps because of his supernatural power—for he was killed by the Brazilians, and now Kuthúgn was living next door to me with Ketédn's wife who was so much older than he. 545

A widow who is no longer young has a hard time of it with her small children. Dependent on relatives, she wanders from household to household. At night she sleeps alone with her little child. There is no one to take care of her. Her brother or cousin or brother-in-law give her food when they have it. They share what they have as a matter of course, but when there is little food their children come first and the widow may get only short rations. Kundídn is such a widow. One day she eats at her cousin's house, the next at her brother's, the next at the house of another cousin. When she is sick her cousin Anggló sometimes comes to sit beside her, but if Anggló is away at some secret rendezvous with her lover, or off hunting with her brother, Kundídn often lies alone and miserable. None of the young men would marry a woman of forty with a goiter. But when she is well Kundídn is vigorous and aggressive. She works longer days in the fields than the younger women, she goes out frequently to look for honey, she is an aggressive and determined suitor and she had almost chopped off Véye's leg when the latter deliberately drowned her brother. Whenever I had to pass her house I made a wide circle because I knew that Kundídn would attempt to seduce me in her violent and jocular manner if she caught sight of me. At last she offered me her wild, thin little daughter, Tombá, aged about eleven. "Take her and bring her up," she said. "When she is grown, marry her, and she will keep house for you." 768

These forms of marriage and the custom of occasional adoption with an eye to the consummation of a future sex relationship are only crystallizations from an almost amorphous social life. Nevertheless, however imperfectly defined, informal, and even casual their sexual arrangements may be, the Kaingáng have made them the center of some kind of relationship that has a permanent value for this society. The casual relationships among young people in our own society that are the outgrowth of passion often serve no other function than to satisfy an overwhelming desire for sexual experience and companionship. Once the couple has drifted apart they have no claims on each other. They are strangers and can never depend on one another for anything. But among the Kaingáng, who literally have 591
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